

FORM B - BUILDING

AREA	FORM NO.
H	373

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
294 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON, MA 02108



n Lexington

ress 19 Oakland Street

toric Name E.P. Bliss House

"Cedarcroft"

: Present residential

Original residential

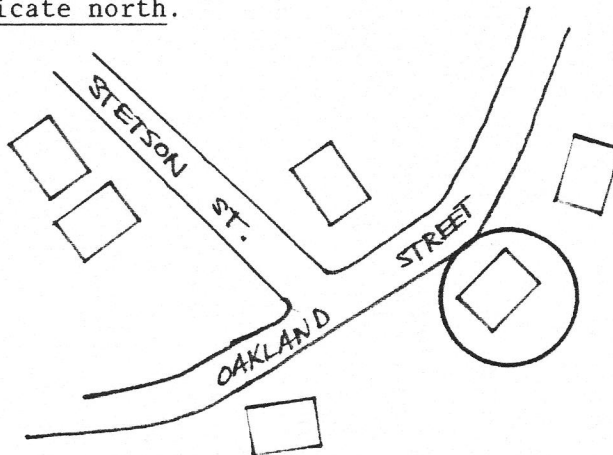
DESCRIPTION:

e 1883-1884

Source Lexington Minute Man, July 13, 1883

SKETCH MAP

Show property's location in relation to nearest cross streets and/or geographical features. Indicate all buildings between inventoried property and nearest intersection. Indicate north.



Style Queen Anne / Craftsman

Allen and Kenway;  
Architect remodeled by Willard Brown

John May, contractor  
Exterior wall fabric shingles

Outbuildings garage

Major alterations (with dates) right

hand half of house added (c. 1906)

Moved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Approx. acreage 1.2 A. (52300 ft.<sup>2</sup>)

Setting On the precipitous southern

slope of Meriam Hill; residential street

developed primarily in the late nineteenth

century.

Recorded by Anne Grady

Organization Lexington Historical Commission

Date March, 1984

(Staple additional sheets here)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.)

The left hand (east) half of the house is the original, 1884 portion of the house. The right hand half was added c. 1906. The original house, designed by the same architects at the same date as 17 Oakland Street, was Queen Anne in style and decorative features included brackets at the eaves, patterned shingles in the small gable which extended above the hip roof, and an oriel window with a heavily molded base. Francis Allen, of the architectural firm which designed the house, later designed Riverside Church in New York in partnership with

(see Continuation Sheet)

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.)

Edward Penniman Bliss, an importer of carriage goods in Boston, built the house. Bliss and George S. Jackson of 17 Oakland Street had been summer guests at the Massachusetts House for several summers. They decided to buy adjoining lots on the newly created Oakland Street and build houses. Jackson's was a summer residence at first; presumably, Bliss' was too.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES (name of publication, author, date and publisher)

Album of works by Willard Brown. Lexington Historical Society archives.

Hudson, Charles. History of the Town of Lexington, revised and continued to 1912 by the Lexington Historical Society, Volume II, p. 34. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913.

Lexington Minute Man, May 11, 1883, July 13, 1883.

Plans of addition by Willard Brown in possession of owner.

1889 atlas

1906 atlas

1887 Directory

1894 Directory

1899 Directory

1906 Directory

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Lexington	Form No: 373
Property Name: 19 Oakland Street	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Charles Collens. The contractor was John May of Magnolia, Massachusetts. The architect of the c. 1906 addition, Willard Brown, was careful to repeat the basic design features of the 1884 house on the exterior except when he added a porch with half-timbered pediment and exposed rafters. The porch and rafter treatment were almost a trademark of Brown's and were included in many of his houses of the period.

The interiors added by Brown are among the architect's most creative work. The precipitous site allowed a full basement on the rear side but was encumbered by an outcropping of bedrock. Brown incorporated the rock into the grotto he designed for the basement. A bed for ferns borders the rock. (Photographs of the addition when new are in an album of works by Willard Brown at the Lexington Historical Society.) Stained glass windows along the south wall are of palm trees rendered in blues and greens. Upstairs along the rear elevation, a porch was enclosed and extended across the addition to form an area called on the plans a "promenade" or a "cloister." The added living room has a free-standing two-sided fireplace of geometric design covered with tiles. Windows are geometric leaded and stained glass somewhat similar to the windows Frank Lloyd Wright was designing for his Prairie Style houses. Photographs show that the original wallpaper in the living room was an oversize William Morris style print. The living room must have seemed very modern when it was designed. Upstairs two bedrooms and a bath were added.

The house at 19A Oakland Street was originally an outbuilding, probably the carriage house for this estate. Now it is under separate ownership.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town  
LEXINGTON

Property Address  
19 OAKLAND ST.

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

H

373

## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

In the spring of 1883, the *Lexington Minute-Man* noted the impending construction of this house as well as the house next door at 17 Oakland Street:

Mr. E. P. Bliss, and Mr. Geo. Jackson, both of Boston and former guests at the Massachusetts House during two summers have bought building lots on the hill back of Lexington station and facing on the new portion of Oakland street. This is a very sightly and attractive part of the town, and no doubt more building projects will soon follow, now that the start has been made (*Minute-man*, May 11, 1883).

In 1888 a stone wall was built around the premises (*Minute-man*, Oct. 19, 1888).

A brief article appearing in the *Lexington Minute-man* on March 16, 1907, offers an unusual glimpse into the interior of the house and the Willard Brown addition:

At Cedarcroft, on Saturday last, a party of the "oldest Lexington boys" were elaborately entertained. To see the Bliss' house is educational and entertaining. The grotto in the basement, with the trickling waters falling into a granite basin, where fishes are sporting, surrounded with exotic plants and blossoms, is a rare sight; and also, in connection, there is a sunny conservatory which adds to the enchanting scene. The living room is filled with rare curios, many from the old world, and its construction is unique and pleasing. The loggia should not be omitted, as from it there is an extended view toward Boston. It is largely encased in glass and well warmed for the winter season, so it is a constant delight. The feast was bountiful and should have to be seen and partaken of to be described. The guests returned to their homes feeling they had been royally entertained, and grateful to the genial host for the favors they had received.

According to the Town History, Edward Penniman Bliss (b.1850) was educated at Harvard and came to Lexington in 1882. He served on the school committee from 1886-1901 and was chosen selectman in 1912. He was active in the Historical Society, the Hancock Church and the Old Belfry Club. He died about 1915.

Edward and his wife Mary did not have any children. In 1920 Mrs. Bliss was living here with her 88 year old mother Mary McKay and four servants. Mrs. Bliss was still living here in 1926 but was gone by 1932.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Lexington Directories, various dates.  
*Lexington Minute-Man*, May 11, 1883; Oct. 19, 1888; March 16, 1907.  
U.S. Census Records, 1900-1930.

Supplement prepared by:  
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